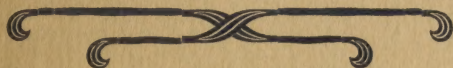


Before my Fire



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Four Sonnets

By Wm. E. MARSHALL.

Issued to his friends

at Christmas-tide

1906.

BEFORE MY FIRE

STRETCHED out in easy chair before my fire
Of maple wood upon old andirons piled,
With cherished book and pleasing pipe of mild
Virginian weed, I lose each vain desire
And self-regret, nor of the world enquire.
Hearing the rocking of the storm-wind wild,
—As 'twere a mother crooning to her child—
My vagrant soul doth into dreams retire.

O radiant shadows of the flame-lit hearth !
When the long winter nights yield leisure time
To be, and grow incorporate, with all
Great names that live eternal in their worth
Of thought and deed upon the page sublime,
What immortality doth on me fall !

IN DREAM I SAW

MINE eyes were closed, yet as in dream I saw
Two glories robed in light ineffable;
And on my ears, dream-like, there rose and fell
Music so ravishing it did withdraw
My soul beyond all time and being's flaw,
Into that realm where truth and beauty dwell ;
Forever and for aye unconquerable
Of earthly pain, or death's eternal law.

'Twas *Ariel* and *Adonais* !—Spirits rare !—
Singing, in mortal words, immortal glee
Of life in beauty and the glow of love ;
Of freedom, and the wind, and cloud ; and there,
The lark up-springing in its ecstasie
Of heart outpoured, into the heaven above.

KEATS*

SWEET melodist upon the pipes of Pan !
Who, Orpheus-like, didst cause the hills
and dales

And the clear streams of Helicon the tales
Of love-lorn deities to hear, ere 'gan
The sun thy dewy breath to steal ! Perchance
It was the soul of some Greek demi-god
Looked out thy glorious eyes and shed abroad
Its wonder light ; so god-like was the glance,
And so all tremulous with beauty thine
Enraptured notes.—And yet, the world denied
Thy voice, until, triumphantly divine,
It rose from earth ; nor heard, till Silence cried
Aloud with grief, th' immortal melody
Of a young life so soon by Death set free.

* " I think I shall be among the English poets after my death."
—From a letter of Keats'.

SHELLEY*

BRIGHT soul that wept for *Adonais* dead,
As for the passing of a world of song
And beauty known too late ! Thou wert, among
The first of unbound Titans, moved to tread
The dumb gloom with thy wing-ed feet, and shed
The music of love's tears upon the throng,
Whom pride, dull-eyed and deaf, in ignorance long
Had held ; and so their larger loss, instead
Of gain, reveal. Ah ! Thou didst hear the flight
Of that rare spirit past th' insensate earth,
Thrilling the void with rich melodious light,
Like some new star rejoicing at its birth ;
And listening, rose up from the stormy sea
Of life to bear it blissful company.

* Shelley—the English Ariel of Song—was drowned by the upsetting of his yacht in a squall off Leghorn. The sad event occurred about a year and a half after the death of his friend, and brother poet, Keats, whose early demise he lamented in that most beautiful threnody entitled “*Adonais*.” Shelley could not swim, and it is said that “he thrust aside into his breast pocket the last volume of Keats, which he had been reading, and went down.”

“Tis *Adonais* calls ! Oh ! hasten thither !
No more let life divide what death can join together.”



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